

Lumber Company Levelled By Fire

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Damage estimates ranged upwards of \$500,000 in the fire which destroyed the main office and two warehouses of the Dixx Lumber Co., 939 Ohio St. early Saturday.

Lightning was believed the cause of the windbourne inferno which apparently started in the storage building on Walnut Street, near the southeast corner of the property, and raced north through the warehouses and offices on Ohio Street.

Ironically, the windstorm out of the south which carried the sweeping flames also received part of the credit for saving two sheds, both full of lumber and building materials, in the southwest corner of the block bordered by 9¹/₂ Street on the west and L&N Railroad tracks on the east.

Asked how firemen had been able to save those two structures, a Terre Haute Fire Department spokesman said with some irony, "The wind was right."

But, neither the wind nor the rain in the springlike storm was of much assistance to firemen who answered the 2:17 a.m. alarm and remained through the remainder of the night fighting the raging flames in a futile attempt to save buildings at the north end of the property.

The firefighters did manage to confine the blaze along its one block path in spite of the weather and the intensity of the fire itself. Five pumper crews and two truck units worked past dawn still pouring water on burning and smouldering piles of rubble spotted here and there from Walnut to Ohio.

Early unofficial damage estimates indicated losses of about \$220,000 each to structure and contents, but it was noted that the total amount could be higher.

Kenneth Borders, president and chairman of the board of the Powell-Stephenson Lumber Co., reported he is also president of a corporation which acquired the Dixx operation a few months ago. That operation, formerly known as the Dix Lumber Co., was a landmark on Ohio Street.

Borders said the determination whether to rebuild or relocate will await consultation with his insurance company.

No injuries were reported at the fire, although several firemen complained of eye irritation and fatigue. Neither hospital reported any treatment given.

Flames were prevented from completing a jump across Ohio Street to the north, but heat did make it, according

to Robert Larr, vice president of WTHI radio and television, 918 Ohio St. He said two large plate glass windows were cracked and a few smaller windows on upper stories broken.

Employees reporting to work in the area early Saturday were also conscious of the strong smell of smoke. Smoke damage, however, was reported slight by the broadcasting company spokesman.

Joe Lowe, executive director of the Wabash Valley Chapter, American Red Cross, said he was called soon after the

alarm and arrived to find most of the lumber operation "already gone." He remained to observe the firefighting and offer any assistance necessary.

No damage was apparent at St. Benedict's Catholic Church, just west of the fire at 9th and Ohio Streets.

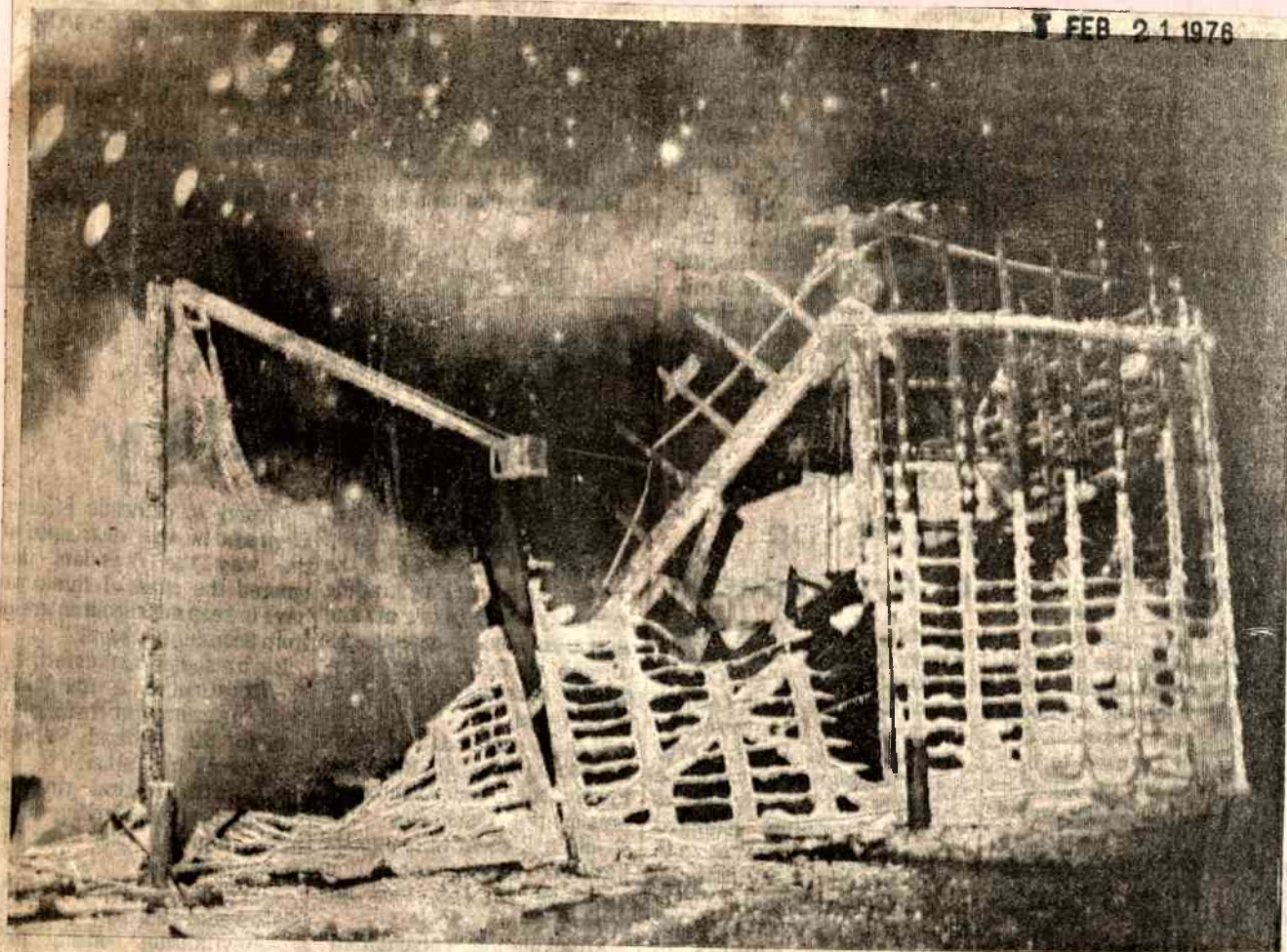
As cloudy skies yielded to daylight, firemen were still at the scene, watering down the debris and beginning the investigation. One man said, "We'll be here all day."

Community Affairs File

Vigo County Public Library

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RAIN AND SPARKS combined to give the illusion of stars in a starless sky over the Dixx Cash & Carry lumber and building materials operation at 939 Ohio St., razed by fire early Saturday.

Only two sheds and a small block building remained as the main office and large drive-through warehouses and pickup stations along the east side of the property were destroyed.

House of Photography Photo.